

Somebody to Love by midnighteverlark

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Summary:

Godd*mn it, I wrote another ficlet.

Prompt: "Now what about Will with Queen's Somebody To Love? When he's feeling angsty about his crush on Mike perhaps?"

Result: a Valentine's Day secret admirer ficlet? I don't even know guys. Somebody stop me.

Somebody to Love

Somebody to Love is a regular on Will's mixtapes in high school. He listens to it on the occasional day when he's feeling especially down in the dumps about this whole *crush* business - not just Mike, but crushes in general. *Society* in general. Because it's not *fair* - it's not fair that he spent the entirety of February so far watching girls giggle in the hallways, listening to boys brag about who they're going to make a move on, seeing red and pink hearts go up everywhere. At least it's not like 8th or 9th grade, where he had to watch - and, in some cases, actually *help* - Mike come up with something sweet to do for El. At the very least, this year he doesn't have to stand at the side while Mike reviews every single box of chocolates in the aisle of Melvald's, or stumbles all over himself trying to figure out how many frilly red blossoms he can afford so they can just *get out of the flower shop already, the owner is laughing at us*. At least it's not that.

But this year isn't really the best either. Everyone is all abuzz about the Roses for Africa program they do every year. For some it's the highlight of the spring semester; for others it's a nightmare and come February 15th they're overjoyed to have it over with. It works like this: you buy a single, rather scraggly rose for 50 cents. You address it to a crush, or a S.O., or whoever you like. You can sign the *from* line on the card, if you wish, or choose to remain anonymous (as almost everyone does). The money is given to a charity, and student volunteers go around the school during the day to deliver the fateful flowers. Most people cross their fingers for a rose, but Will? Well, it's kind of a double edged sword. Receiving nothing always makes his chest sting a little in disappointment, but if he does get one, then what? Even if it's anonymous he'll spend the whole time worrying. If it's a girl he'll feel bad that she wasted her time and money - plus, how is he supposed to get out of that situation if she *does* sign it? He can't exactly say, *I think you're very smart and pretty, but there's no way I could be interested in you - nothing personal, I swear*. He'd be stuck. And on the distant off-chance that it *wasn't* a girl - not that he'd know, if it was anonymous - he thinks he'd just have a heart attack and die right there.

Valentine's Day draws closer and it seems like couples are *everywhere*.

Kissing constantly in the hallways between classes, wrapped around each other on the sidewalks, holding hands through mittens. Will wants to gag. And then he's sitting in Chemistry and he runs his thumb over a scratch in the desk, and he looks down and the scratch says, *Kayla + Brian*. And he just stares at it for about two minutes straight, and then starts to have a silent internal breakdown. Because, damnit, this isn't fair. This isn't *fair*. Why can't he ever, *ever* look down at a desk and see *Jake + Andy* or even *Mary + Jenny*? All he wants is what everybody else takes for granted.

And what does Will do when he's feeling angsty? Well, often he listens to music that fits his mood - which, actually, oftentimes makes him feel worse. But that's besides the point. He has the perfect song for this. Plus, Freddie would understand, wouldn't he?

He listens to the Queen's Greatest Hits tape for the next day and a half, trying to drown out Valentine's Day entirely. He keeps rewinding to one song in particular, listening to it with headphones on, blocking out the rest of the pink-and-red-confettied world in his own little bubble of music.

"Can anybody find me somebody to love? Ooh, each morning I get up I die a little; can barely stand on my feet. (Take a look at yourself) take a look in the mirror and cry (and cry) - Lord, what you're doing to me? I have spent all my years in believing you; but I just can't get no relief, Lord! Somebody (somebody) ooh somebody (somebody) - can anybody find me somebody to love?"

At lunch, Mike shows up a little red-faced. Max pulls out a rose from his backpack, much to Mike's protest, and announces that he got it in history class. It's anonymous, signed *secret admirer* in fancy, curly cursive in sky-blue gel pen. Clearly a girl. He just stammers and tries to hide the flower again, and the Party pokes fun at him. Will can't bring himself to be very upset; somewhere between middle and high school, Mike grew out of his baby fat and shot up nearly a foot, it seemed. And he's kind, and brave, and funny - Will can't blame the girl for liking him.

He slides down in his seat and pulls his headphones up over his ears again while he eats.

"I work hard (he works hard) every day of my life; I work 'til I ache in my bones. At the end (at the end of the day) I take home my hard earned pay all on my own. I get down (down) on my knees (knees) and I start to pray - 'til the tears run down from my eyes. Lord, somebody (somebody), ooh somebody (please) - can anybody find me somebody to love?"

For a moment - just a moment - Will wishes he had bought a rose of his own. Left the *from* line blank, addressed it *to Mike Wheeler*. He would have gotten to watch Mike's face flush, watched him stammer and try to hide his smile, and he could have known that it was because of him. Whether Mike knew it or not, that blush and that little secret smile would be because of Will - *for* Will. But then Will shakes himself, and tells himself that, no, that's stupid. Mike would recognize his handwriting, anyway - unless, perhaps, he wrote in his best cursive and intentionally warped some of the letters... Mike is only really familiar with his print, after all...

"Everyday (everyday) I try and I try and I try - but everybody wants to put me down. They say I'm going crazy. They say I got a lot of water in my brain; ah, got no common sense - I got nobody left to believe in. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah -"

Someone's nudging him. He pulls the headphones down around his neck and Lucas points. A few tables away, an unfortunate volunteer in a red and white identifying sash is calling, "William Byers? William Byers? Is there a William Byers? Bill? Bill Byers?" In one hand they hold a plastic vase full of flowers; in the other is one red blossom, a paper tag between their finger and thumb.

Oh, no.

Dustin's hand shoots up. He points at Will. "Yes, over here! Over here, this is Bill! Bill Byers right here."

Will tries to wrestle his arm down, but it's too late; the volunteer catches sight of them, makes a beeline for their table, and holds out the rose. Their voice grates over the worn syllables of a phrase repeated far too many times in one day - "Delivery for you. Happy Valentine's."

With no choice, Will takes the flower.

Lucas thumps him on the back and cackles, “So, *Bill*, who’s it from?”

“You’re never gonna let that go, are you?” Will says. He’s fiddling with the paper tag, stretching the blue-ish rubber band that attaches it to the stem, but he doesn’t look yet.

“Never,” Dustin and Lucas confirm at the same time, and then Dustin repeats, “Bill Byers.”

“Well?” Max prompts. El leans across the table, brown eyes alight with curiosity.

Will feels Mike’s eyes on him, but he doesn’t want to look. He knows what he’s going to see. Mike will give him an encouraging nod, perhaps a nudge forward. Like when they were kids at the Snow Ball, and all Will wanted to do was dance with Mike, but Mike smiled and pushed him towards Samantha Lyons. He knows if he looks now, Mike will just do the same thing. Give him a little encouraging nudge, gesture towards the tag. Push Will to see what poor girl misplaced her affections.

He can still hear the song playing from the headphones around his neck.

“Oh, Lord, ooh somebody, ooh somebody - can anybody find me somebody to love? Can anybody find me someone to love?”

He unfolds the tag just as his favorite part of the song comes on, and stares at the name there. For a second his heart sinks, and he’s trying to think of an Alexandra or and Alexis that goes to their school, but he can’t bring up a face. Then something clicks and he actually feels his breath catch.

“Got no feel, I got no rhythm. I just keep losing my beat (you just keep losing and losing) - I’m OK, I’m alright (he’s alright, he’s alright). I ain’t gonna face no defeat (yeah yeah). I just gotta get out of this prison cell - one day (someday) I’m gonna be free, Lord!”

The song soars through the climax, soft and tinny from the headphones, and Will’s mind races. The tag is marked *To: William Byers, From: Alex Rogan*. Not Alexis or Alexandra, but as in Alexander

Rogan.

As in, the Last Starfighter.

As in, the arguably handsome video game loser from the trailer park who went on to become savior of the universe in one of the best shittiest movies ever.

As in, *“Greetings, Starfighter. You have been recruited by the Star League to defend the frontier against Xur and the Ko-Dan armada”* Alex Rogan. That Alex Rogan.

As in, a guy.

As in, somebody wanted to remain anonymous, but they wanted to leave Will a hint.

The others are all badgering him, repeating, “Who is it? Who is it? Is it signed?”

Will folds the paper again, rips it off the stem, and stows it away in his pocket. “Anonymous,” he says. “They used a pseudonym.”

From his headphones, the lyric *“find me somebody to love”* repeats over and over. Will’s pulse is starting to pick up.

He meets Mike’s eyes, finally, and kind of pauses. He expected to find nothing but mischief and curiosity in Mike’s face - maybe Mike would even reach for his pocket, try to steal the tag to see what it says - but instead, he finds Mike’s eyes flicking away. He doesn’t look curious, really, just... Will doesn’t know.

It can’t mean anything.

Then he’s bombarded with questions, and Max is poking him trying to get him to give up the paper, and he has to fend off the rest of the Party for most of lunch.

He spends the next few weeks peering around his classrooms, seeing if he can catch any pairs of eyes on him in the hallways. Scanning for anyone with a Last Starfighter folder or button. Wondering what connoisseur of shitty movies sent him that rose. Of course, there’s a

chance it could be a girl... but why specifically choose the name of a male protagonist as a pseudonym? It has to be a guy... right?

He loses sleep over it, and has that song stuck in his head for days on end.